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THE CONTRAST BETWEEN TODAY AND YESTERDAY -
DESCRIPTION OF LAO KAY MINING AREA

By Do Thanh

- NORTH VIETNAM -

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FOREWORD

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[The following is a translation of an
article written by Do Thanh in Lao
Dong (Labor), Hanoi, No 786, 16 Au-
gust 1960, page 3.]

In Lao Kay, every time the words "Cam-duong Mines" are mentioned, everyone is struck with horror. The past fills our memories with dreadful remembrances of the sufferings of families who had sons and relatives working as mining laborers under the French and Japanese regimes. Gambling, drinking, women, and illnesses destroyed their lives. A few men among these, lucky enough to be still alive, returned home looking like ghosts. With grayish-black skins, they looked worn-out, and were feverish because of malaria.

Thus were the pictures of the Cam-duong Mines in the old time; today, fortunately, under the strong

wind of the August Revolution, such situations have disappeared forever.

Right on the day the revolution ended, at the area now known as the "apatite mining area," one could already see workers, trying to learn about the nature of the soil in the forest. Following these workers other groups came to construct the mine. At the beginning, there were a few workers who were still haunted by the ghosts of the strange land and water; everything was inadequate and lives were difficult. Now, everything is changed. The sounds of the mines, of boring and scooping machines cover the mining area day and night.

Sinuuous trains, resembling giant snakes, hug the mountain-sides. At Pom-han station, standing in front of the station and looking up, one can see a chain of two-story houses with red roofs and walls still wet with paint. The scenery reminds one of vacation palaces along the coast of the Crimea in Soviet Russia, or the "golden beaches" in Bulgaria. Farther along, the "collective" living quarters occupied by the workers extend like boxes, building a stairway to the sky.

Men and women workers in the construction [force] building the Lao Kay mining area are all strong and healthy; everyone is contributing enthusiastically in making

the area more beautiful every day.

From being an isolated area, far from markets and with a sparse population, the mines have become a city full of activities and fun. Department stores have been opened to serve the mining-construction force. Supply departments have been increased and well organized. The mine owns 100 cows, 1,000 chickens, ducks and pigs, and well-kept vegetable gardens. Cows and pigs, when first bought, were small and skinny; today after receiving a short time of good care, they have gained weight and are good sized.

This construction [unit] is the best unit in Lao Kay in improving the lives of workers; it is self-sufficient in the basic foodstuffs. Followings are examples: In the first half of 1960, the supply department has provided workers with 27,516 kilograms of pork, 5,788 kilograms of beef and 8,340 kilograms of bean cakes, including some 10 tons of supplementary food such as cakes, dumplings, delicacies, etc..

Profits from cattle raising and opening of canteens are used to better the workers' lives; moreover, wages are also paid to the 15 workers who help in raising the cattle. Moreover, prices are lower here than that in the surrounding cities. There are also nurseries

which care for workers' children.

There are male and female volley ball and basketball teams in every unit. The volleyball team in the South was voted the best team in the city at the General Confederation's volleyball contest.

Construction is developing every day, and every day the livelihood of the workers is becoming better. Comrade Tu, a worker who had the experience of mining during the Japanese occupation, declared to his friends just before he went on vacation: "On this vacation, when I am at home, I must let relatives and friends know that the Cam-duong Mines are completely changed today."